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Introduction: Himalaya and Trans-Himalaya: Connecting Histories, Transcending Disciplines[1]

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Himalaya, along with the Trans-Himalaya[2], are imposing physical relief in South and Southeast Asia. Geopolitically, these mountain ranges with their passes have been contact-zones for different cultures, traditions, ethnicities and religions. These areas were also part of the Great Silk Route in ancient times, with many trade centres located along the way. The mountain passes allowed easy access to people and goods of diverse backgrounds from Central and Southeast Asia. They have been the most fluid and the most contentious zones in the past and also today, as they are also the borderland areas in the colonial and postcolonial times. These regions, with a permeable flow of religion, commodities and mobility, do not fit into territorial boundedness of empires and now the modern nation-states.

These mountain spaces were appropriated differently by the dominant political groups in different periods of history. In the traditional Brahminic perceptions, Himalaya are sacred spaces, where the lord of vegetation, Mahadev or Shiva resides. Himalaya and trans-Himalaya are dotted with the sacred geography, where the pilgrims freely travelled in search of peace, meditation and liberation from worldly pursuits. In the brahminic imagination, the Himalaya emerge as "empty spaces", as the gods reside in "pure" spaces, unpolluted by

human presence (Pradhan 2017).[3] This view makes the mountains devoid of people and history. The colonial writings also usually presented Himalaya and Trans-Himalaya as areas without history. They were described as a *tabula rasa* or as *terra incognita*, constructing a teleology of "savage" to the "civilised" to legitimise the English presence in the hills.

The advent of the colonial state in the nineteenth century in the Himalaya led to interference in the political and social life of the regions, leading to new territorial configurations and political and spatial alignments. The English empire viewed these ranges as a natural line of defence, a "scientific frontier" for the Indian subcontinent. The colonial authorities, therefore, entered into conflict with the political powers in these areas like Nepal, Afghanistan, Punjab and later Sikkim. They also propagated the idea of *pax Britannica* and closely connected to it, the civilising mission. This line of thinking led to frenetic movements in the mountainous regions and treaties and diplomatic overtures with Afghanistan, Nepal and later on, China and Tibet.

Subsequently, the region of Himalaya and trans-Himalaya was the theatre of the "Great Game" that was played out by the European imperial rivals, Britain and Russia in the Northwestern part of India, (Tripodi 2011) leading to the colonial adventurism in Afghanistan. This rivalry was due to the exigencies of the colonial-capitalist state with its trade interests. It was again for economic reasons that the British empire looked towards the eastern and the northeastern parts of the empire, into Doars, Assam, Sikkim and then Tibet by the end of the nineteenth century. Many of these regions were projected to be the "forbidden" or "hidden lands". It suggests the insularity and isolation of these regions, not only geographically, but also historically. The imperial writings suggest that Tibet was only "opened" with the Younghusband's expedition in 1904. What is "opened up" are the trading ties with Tibet. Various ethnographic studies and imperial gazetteers represented these regions to be 'a babel of tribes and nations' (O'Malley 1907: 41).[4]

The postcolonial academic writings have challenged the conventional views regarding the territorially-fluid region and how the borderlands are perceived. Willem van Schendel added a new dimension to the area and regional studies by drawing attention to 'the liminal places' (Schendel 2002: 650f.) on the borderlands of large states in the region like China and India. This area, called Zomia by van Schendel, includes

the Himalaya, the Tibetan highlands and southeast Asia. It has porous or fluid borders, with multiple ethnicities, in-between the large states. The region of Zomia, according to Schendel, was ignored in the post-second world war era with the focus then on the emergence of larger newly-independent states in the region such as India, China, etc. The South Asian history has largely focussed on partition and the changing territorial configuration in its aftermath, such as Bangladesh. The imperial states have always considered this region as intractable and ungovernable.

It is argued by James Scott while expanding on the idea of Zomia as '*nonstate spaces* [italics in the original]' as 'difficult and inaccessible terrain, regardless of elevation, that presents great obstacles to state control.' (Scott 2010: 13) These regions posit Scott, became the refuge of those 'evading' the centralising forces of a state. He identified the 'great mountain realm touching Southeast Asia, China, India, and Bangladesh', an area of 'roughly 2.5 million square kilometres' as Southeast Asian *massif* or Zomia—'one of the largest remaining nonstate spaces in the world' (ibid.: 13f.). He argues that they deliberately continued with the oral traditions to evade the dominant state players, be it the colonists or the nation-states. The non-written tradition allowed them a position of vantage, in terms of giving autonomy to their politico-cultural traditions. However, this argument suggests certain homogenisation of the cultural and religious practices of this region, but the process of these regions emerging as distinct socio-politico-cultural spaces is far more complex. The impressions of these mountain societies as insular and unaffected from the dominant state systems would not be correct.

Jonsson looks at Zomia as a 'concept-metaphor' (Hjorleifur Jonsson 2010: 192), which opens up a new paradigm for historical and anthropological researches. Jonsson cautions about problems of creating a binary of a highland and a lowland and viewing the high-lands as ahistorical while building on the idea of Zomia. Sara Shneiderman expands the idea of Zomia to the concept of 'border citizens' (Shneiderman 2013: 26), who negotiate with 'multiple-state space' (ibid: 28). She argues that contrary to the evasion of the state authorities, one can also read the possibility of successful negotiations between the people living on the borderlands with the multiple states and their agencies.

In many ways, there is an argument about the Himalayan and trans-Himalaya as the spaces on the margins, but that gain depends

on the perspective from which one is looking. From the perspectives of the political empires in the plains, there is a marginal significance to many of these regions. Yet, the process of state formation is equally dynamic in the Himalaya and trans-Himalaya region and many a political conflict occur in this region on people and territories. The political histories of Tibet and Sikkim are closely aligned, at least since the seventeenth century. Nepal is a dominant state player in the eastern Himalaya. Bhutan was also an independent kingdom, with Bhutia traders maintaining trade links with the different regions of Himalaya and trans-Himalaya. Their mobility became restricted with the coming up of the new nation-states of India and Pakistan. The Kashmiri traders were travelling to various parts of the Indian sub-continent and different regions across the mountain ranges.

The period of European colonialism constructs the binary of the plains and the hills which comes through in many representations of the imperial writings, travelogues and tourist handbooks of the nineteenth century. In this polarisation, highlands were segregated from the plains. However, on the contrary, there was an imperial presence in medieval times and most of the movement of trade and armies since the ancient times was from the north-west frontier passes. During the Mughal war of succession under Shahjahan, the Mughal Prince Shuja sought refuge with the Ahoms of Assam, who played an important role in the history of the northeast and Assam in particular. The reference to the intersections of the great and little traditions in the hills, as in many other parts of South Asia is again familiar. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in the early nineteenth century entered into matrimonial alliances with the rulers of the hill states. Ranjeet Singh incorporated many hill states of present-day Himachal Pradesh. The rise of Dogras and the establishment of their kingdom in Jammu and Kashmir also happens in this period. These are the political histories of the region, wherein the state actors play a prominent role.

Such imperial histories of pre-colonial times also ignore the existence of local people with their beliefs, customs and practices. Colonial ethnographers described these hill people as "picturesque", as the fossilised relics of the past. An impression of immutability and the unchanging landscape is associated with these mountainous regions. The recent historiography on these areas counters the remoteness of these regions and finds these regions to be humming with activities, with everyday movements of the local people. Gerald D. Berreman has been among the earliest scholars in the 1960s to research the Hindus of Sirkanda, a village in the lower Himalaya in Uttarakhand (Berreman

1963: 2). Berreman's ethnographic study finds that 'Sirkanda shares the social structure of the Hindu Indian society' (ibid.: 144). He challenges the notion of simple egalitarian societal structures in these regions as they are organised around 'family, caste and community' (ibid.). The 'Paharis', a term used by Berreman, followed the literate or the Great Tradition of the Hindus loosely.

For the hill people, it is a land of their ancestors, where every nook and cranny, a rock or a river is a landscape of memory of the past actions of their ancestors. Their customs and religious beliefs are at variance with those of the rulers. There are meeting points for the dominant and the popular culture, with a visible hegemonic hold of the dominant culture on the popular culture. The dialogism is strongly present in these regions, where the animist and semi-animist beliefs of popular culture came in contact with the dominant Brahminic and Buddhist cultures. The fairs and other ritualistic ceremonies brought these two cultures together.

The collection of essays in the "Focus section" of *South Asia Chronicle* attempts to add to our understanding on the theme of Himalaya and Trans-Himalaya from the perspective of history and anthropology. The Himalaya and trans-Himalaya, as the articles in this edition show, were interconnected—politically, culturally and economically. Their religious developments were also a result of constant interaction and exchange of ideas. These areas are not merely "geographical expressions" and various researches in recent times have drawn attention to the histories, traditions and cultures in existence there. Many essays in the "Focus section" question the purely Brahminic association, as also the ties with the northern Indian politics and religion, exploring the linkages between the animistic, Brahminic and Buddhist traditions in the mountains. While discussing the papers, some of the historiographical issues, methods and challenges of research also emerge.

In today's historiographical trends on Himalaya and trans-Himalaya, there is an attempt to look at the non-state actors or lesser prominent groups and communities who also play an active role in shaping the history of these regions. These could be the Lepchas, Bhutias, Tibetans, Mughs, Mechis, Newaris, and Gorkhas (many included in the blanket term 'Nepalese'); and Gaddis of the Upper Himalaya in the north, the Kanet peasant community in the Simla hills or a common term 'Paharis' for the hill people in general in Himachal and Kumaun.

Neeladri Bhattacharya's article focuses on these non-state actors and their movements traversing the Himalayan and the Trans-Himalayan region, primarily in colonial Punjab. Many of the highland groups are itinerant due to the practice of trans-humans being carried out for centuries. The attempts of colonial authorities to limit their mobility creates frictions. Tensions between the state and such non-state players and are discussed at length by Neeladri Bhattacharya. His essay draws attention to the different categories of pastoral groups, some of them are long-distance pastoralists like *Powindahs* coming from Central Asia for trade and pasturage in India. They are not homogenous and are further divided into those with *Kirris* (camp villages) and are wealthy, while there are others seeking employment, escape from the harsh winters of upland Central Asia. In the alpine pastoral groups, *Gaddis* (shepherds) and *Ban-Gujars* (cowherds) practice pastoralism, and in semi-arid plains of Punjab, Bhattis, Wattus, Joiyas and Bodlas are the pastoralists.

In his essay, he argues how there is a suspicion of such itinerant population, as the colonial accounts represent them as 'lazy'. In comparison, the Sikh and Jat agriculturalists are appreciated by the colonial state for practising a sedentary occupation of agriculture. The order and structure of agriculture suited the colonial frame of mind with its focus on control and regulations. The legal and political structures of the colonial state went against the pastoral populations, who denied or restricted their legal rights on the forest, pasture grounds and other common grounds by recognising the proprietary rights of the *pattidar* agriculturists. Once forests became the state property, the pastoral groups like the Gaddis had to pay the grazing tax. From the *warisi*, the Gaddis were reduced to be the *assamis* of the *muqaddams*, the latter claiming *maliki* rights. But, as Neeladri Bhattacharya concludes, 'there is both resistance and adaptation to change […] there is no uniform, unilinear development.'

A major challenge for the historians has been the dearth of historical documents while working on the historical dimensions of the mountainous regions. Saul Mullard working on the history of Sikkim mentions the 'problems with the identification of source material' (Mullard 2019: 5); Arik Moran and Catherine Warner in their introduction to the theme of 'Himalayan Histories' and Chetan Singh on the Himachal hills admit to these challenges for the historians. Chetan Singh wrote: 'Regional historians impeded by the lack of historical sources may possibly be prompted to adopt some of the research methods of the other social sciences.' (Singh 2018: 7) Accepting the impediment of written

records, historians, of late, have taken recourse to the inter-disciplinary methodology. Oral and literary records have a rich worldview of the perceptions, thoughts and sentiments of the local inhabitants of these regions. Vasudha Pande's paper "Of 'journeys' and 'geographies' the Himalayas and Trans-Himalayas in Kumauni literature", deals with some such issues.

She explores the connection between Western Tibet and Kumaun. Western Tibet or Trans-Himalaya, a term popularised by Sven Heden in his three-volume work titled "Trans-Himalaya"[5] constitutes the northern boundary of Kumaun. She mentions the networks of trade, grains and pasturage between the Tibet plateau and the middle mountains. An important socio-religious tradition was influential in linking Himalaya and trans-Himalaya through the ascetics moving between these two regions. It led to the development of a tradition of local literature which may provide insight to the historians. She explores how the Paharis (mountain-people) write about their mountains, the Himalaya. The author examines a kind of sense of place and space found in Kumauni narratives, in a large number of folk stories which are largely about journeys across varied geographies. They connect cultivators and herders who traverse the Tarai-Bhabhar, the Himalayan valleys, pastures of the Upper Himalayas and the Trans-Himalayas in a seasonal and vertical movement. These stories are about love and longing across diverse regions, but also feature ascetics and celebrate renunciation (the Nath traditions). These journeys are often read as allegorical. Malushahi is one such story—Rajula's journey to meet her beloved Malushahi stitches into single narrative diverse cultures and peoples.

Yet Pahari literature also has a classical genealogy that constructs sacred geography through pilgrimage. The *Manaskhand,* written in Sanskrit, describes the route to Lake Manas and Mount Kailas from Kumaun. It uses the Puranic format of dialogue and sanctifies the entire region through circumambulation and devotion. Interestingly, it includes Far Western Nepal and the Trans-Himalaya in its spatial imaginary. It was probably composed by the Dasnam Sanyasis, who took over control of important sites in the Central Himalayas and Trans-Himalayas from the Naths. An important aspect of both these imaginaries is the close relationship with the Trans-Himalayas, though contemporary Uttarakhand is quite unaware of this connect. Kumauni literature tells tales about other journeys and geographies. With the coming of the colonial state, there was a separation of the trans-Himalaya and Upper Himalayan region from the middle and lower

Himalayan regions. There were also erasures of certain histories, which comes out in Vasudha Pande's paper. She argues that the separation, based on the land revenue concerns of the colonial state, made Kumaun move and affiliate itself closely with the North Indian trade-tions, away from the trans-Himalaya cultural traditions. The new imagination placed trans-Himalayan sites like the kailas Mansarovar as Hindu pilgrim sites. The other kind of interactions—the role of the Bhutia traders, Buddhist and other local belief systems practised in Kumaun and Tibet—are being erased from the more recent histories of Kumaun, since the colonial period. The colonial authorities had differ-ent objectives for entering these regions.

In the next paper, the "Syncretism of religious beliefs among the tribes in Western Himalayas (Lahoul and Spiti)" the objective, as stated by the author, Laura Yerekesheva is to trace 'intermingle' and 'interinfluence' between so-called primordial beliefs (animism, totemism, shamanism) and Buddhism and Hinduism in Western Himalaya's Lahoul (the modern Himachal Pradesh state of India, district Lahoul and Spiti). Methodologically based on 'the system approach' that highlights the culture-religion interplay, and practically supported by field explorations, the article focuses on the reciprocal influence of Buddhism and Hinduism perceptions and beliefs on the one hand, and primordial animist and totemic practices, on the other hand.

Theoretically, it supports two major suppositions: 1) the thesis of the decisive role of culture as all-embracing system vis-à-vis religion, as its part; 2) localisation of this or that religion through developing its adaptation functions, towards local beliefs and traditional patterns of living. The article analyses the primordial elements in existing modern beliefs to support the thesis of syncretism as operating on the cultural level, and of religions being the part of cultures. Laura Yerekesheva, in her paper, traces this syncretism in religious rites, traditional practices and ways of living in the cultural ecosystem of Lahoul. In the process, the author traces the interactions between Tibet, Kulu and Lahoul. The political relationships are negotiated and interspersed with mythic tales, and common cultural geography emanates from such tales. The paper draws an interesting connection between the prominent deity Shiva and the actual historical figure, Gyapo Gyaser, the Tibetan King. Both were 'creatively adjusted with the frame of mythology' (Yereke-sheva).

In the southern or the 'Kulu' version, Rohtang Pass was created by the leap of Shiva on peoples' request, while in the north of Lahoul, the Buddhist version attribute it to the Tibetan King, Gyapo Gyaser, who created a major dent with his magical hunting crop. The stories also reveal the attitudes of the hill people towards Hinduism and Buddhism. The essay also mentions the cult of stones common to Central Asia, Turkey, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Altai and even Kaaba are associated with commemorative practices all over the world. The author strongly suggests the traces of syncretism in such common practices while intermingling with the dominant traditions. She argues for a 'religious interinfluence' as an aspect of syncretism and tolerance ins Indian ethos.

The focus of the colonial histories has been on their activities in the highlands, and their referral point is Europe and not India. The hill stations that the colonial authorities 'created' for their recreation and to move away from the heat of the Indian plains in the summers had political ramifications that resonate across the Himalaya and trans-Himalaya. The process of nineteenth-century colonisation gives an impression that before the British imperial ventures, these areas were without much interaction. The colonial authorities tried to integrate many parts of the Himalayan highlands within the religious traditions of the plains, as argued by Vasudha Pande. Contrary to that, more recent historiography points towards a constant exchange of ideas, culture and religious practices across Himalaya and trans-Himalaya. Imperial expansions and cultural fusion is a process that has been happening in these areas since the ancient times, as pointed out by M. N. Rajesh in his paper, "The struggle for ancient Tibet in the modern narratives of the People's Republic of China and the Central Tibetan administration with reference to Indic influences".

He analyses how in the immediate aftermath of the birth of the people's republic of China in 1949 and its expansion into Tibet a legitimising narrative of modernisation and emancipation from imperialism was advanced to the wider world audience. After 1959, with the fall of Old Tibet, the diatribe against centuries-old feudal serfdom strengthened the Chinese position and gave it a rhetorical strength that ran along with the current of modernity and emancipation. Today, the battle between the People's Republic of China and the Central Tibetan Administration and the Free Tibet movement has spread to another new terrain—the ancient period of Tibet. Themes such as the imperial period of Tibet, the first Emperor Songtsen Gampo and his Chinese wife Princess Wen Cheng Kong Jo

and the place of Buddhism and more importantly the ethnogenesis of the Tibetan people have all become important landmarks in this narrative.

This article seeks to analyse these themes that have been a bone of contention trying to understand the sources and the methods employed along with the rhetorical positions of both these parties 'to see how historical events have become sites of contemporary concerns, informed largely by modernist exigencies of nationalism' (M. N. Rajesh). The essay discusses the themes of early Ramayana, the Tibetan script and the connection between the Indic myths and the ethnogenesis of the Tibetans and the spread of Buddhism along with some associated themes like the Tibetan script and medicine and Indic deities to challenge the Chinese-centric approach to the history of ancient Tibet. Further, the construction of these two narratives also robs both the regions especially the borderlands of their agency and how the treatment of these themes have affected the borderlands as a choice borne out by strategic essentialism has come about. The Chinese historiography, argues M. N. Rajesh, draws a strong connection between the Chinese and Tibetan histories from the time of Han dynasty, which tried to acculturate Tibetans to Chinese ways through marriage alliances with the Tibetan kings. The marriage of the first Tibetan Emperor, Songtsen Gampo with the Chinese Tang Princess Wen Cheng Kong Jo is seen in the Chinese historiography as civilising Tibet through Buddhism. The fact that this marriage was due to the military supremacy of the Tibetan King, forcing the Chinese ruler to go for a marriage alliance is missing in the Chinese accounts but is mentioned in the Tibetan accounts. The marriage of the Tibetan King with the Nepalese princess, bringing her Buddhist tradition is also underplayed. It indicates how history has emerged as a contest between the Tibetans and the Chinese.

Chinese history wants to project itself as the liberator of Tibet and bringer of civilisation and modernisation from the feudal theocratic control of the Dalai Lama. Rajesh argues that modern China is looking at ancient Tibet with an agenda to align the ancient Tibetan history with the Chinese one. Chinese historians foreground the role of royal Chinese women as cultural ambassadors in spreading the Chinese culture to Tibet, mapping out the political importance of the royal women in the region. The modern Chinese Historiography tries to yoke Tibet’s ancient past to China, ignoring the fact that it was the might of the Tibetan king which led to the Chinese capitulation in the form of a matrimonial alliance. Rajesh’s paper argues for further researches in

the ancient period of Tibet history through the help of other sources and archaeological remains, which connects Tibet to China, Nepal and India in the past.

Moving away from the politico-cultural interface between the Himalaya and trans-Himalaya, Romita Ray's essay, "Love on wheels: the toy train and the tea plantation in Pradeep Sarkar's *Parineeta* (2005)", focuses on another kind of historiography on these regions. Many sites in Himalaya were celebrated as ideal "sanitariums" in the nineteenth century, converting into imperial summer capitals in the 1860s and finally popular tourist destinations in the twentieth century. The British established more than 200 "hill stations", a colonial term for such locales, in the nineteenth century. The travel accounts, memoirs, official records, hand-books and tourist guides created a spectacle of a "Home away from Home", and 'Mini England' (Pradhan 2017: 3) in the Tropics. The power of gaze plays a central role in placing such hill locations, (not only in the Himalaya but in other mountain ranges in the Indian sub-continent, such as the Vindhyas, Palni Hills, Nilgiris, Aravllis, etc.) in the frame of the picturesque, steeped in the European sensibilities. The landscape of these mountainous sites was disengaged from its moorings and became part of the English, Scottish or European landscape as established in the conventions of the picturesque paintings in Europe. It created a plain-hill binary, as there was a constant contrast between the malignant heat of the plains and the temperate climate of the hills.

Romita Ray's article is an interesting postcolonial reading of the hill station of Darjeeling, in which Indian sensibilities replace the English and European sensibilities, through a film in the background of Darjeeling. She finds certain common patterns in the middle-class bourgeois values systems—the romance of the hills, which only adds to the fervour of the lover. It is a complex reading of the placement of the hills in postcolonial India. Her paper explores a continuity in the colonial and postcolonial perspectives in terms of the tourist gaze, but at the same time, she discusses the class differences and gender issues that are more pronounced in the film in the representations of the main protagonists. In this article, she looks at how Sarkar deploys the train and the tea plantation as nodes of desire and longing to visualise the romance between Shekhar and Lalita, the film's lead characters. The famed toy train or the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) was restored to shoot a song sequence in tea country in North Bengal. In the process, Sarkar draws upon the iconic image of the woman tea plucker or picker promoted by the Indian tea industry and

also makes conspicuous visual references to the 1969 Hindi film *Aradhana*. How might such appropriations transform Lalita into Shekhar's fantasy and what might they tell us about the embeddedness of the colonial past in the celluloid past? The argues that such imaginings demonstrate the power of nostalgia to re-arrange the axes of public memory and cultural identities as Lalita and Shekhar's romance is embedded within the heterosexual norms of courtship and marriage, and two colonial sites are 're-framed as irrefutably Indian landmarks' (Sen in the present volume).

There is an intertwining of the destiny of the two main actors with twists and turns of a mountainous track. The hill landscape becomes a background on which the romantic saga unfolds with its varied emotions. In the colonial template too, the hills release the colonists from their "officialdom", and they are free to explore their English sensibilities in the backdrop of an English landscape. Nostalgia is common in both the colonial and postcolonial frame in the context of the mountains. The English colonists remember the days of their childhood on seeing the mountain vegetation, while the hero of *Parineeta* longs for his beloved. It reinstates the romantic trope celebrating the romance of the hill space, Darjeeling. The film appropriates the previously colonial sites, the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railways and the tea-plantations as the Indian sites and national heritage. The fetish with these sites as tourist spectacles continues.

The political spectrum of these Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region is in continuous focus in the postcolonial writings on these regions. These regions have seen the rise of a new political consciousness around sub-nationalities and identity assertions (Middleton & Shneiderman 2018). Many of these ideas started crystallising in the colonial context due to a variety of reasons. The emergence of the hill stations as summer sanitariums led to a rapid process of urbanisation in these areas. To name a few: population movement from the rural hinterland and surrounding regions to the colonial hill stations, changing demographics, bringing in of a new demographic differentiation and complexities of urbanisation and stunted modernisation. The 'projects of modernity', that is the capitalism of Europe and 'its transplantation in the form of colonialism' (Guha 1991: 1) was not harmonious. It created resistance and opposition not only to the economic and political changes but also triggered the 'ecological landscape of resistance' (ibid.: 2), undermining the ecological balance between agriculture and forest and the people. It also led to the rise of the economies of scale with the plantation capital

and global markets, impacting the lives of the local people. In this context, Debarati Sen's article makes an important contribution to exploring the histories of labour and gender in Darjeeling.

In the article "'What makes Darjeeling Tea authentic?' Colonial heritage and contemporary sustainability practice in Darjeeling, India", Debarati Sen examines placemaking through the commodification of colonial heritage in contemporary sustainability discourse and practice. It illuminates how landscapes of production and landscapes of leisure articulate through the imagination and appropriation of the concept 'heritage' (Sen). Although the colonial and sustainable in the same frame may sound counterintuitive, she argues that the binary is no longer necessary in contemporary practices of placemaking engendered by market-driven global sustainability regimes. In examining such conjunctures, the paper also problematises heritage in a post-colonial plantation town setting. That fact that post-colonial plantations are merging ecotourism with organic tea production has a peculiarity of its celebrations of the 'exotic'. The accentuated celebration of heritage by state tourism authorities and private plantation owners is tactical. It aims at a particular form of 'showcasing regeneration' (Sen) for marginal areas to survive in a global economy. What is celebrated in the process is not indigenous people, wild animals, archaeological sites but a spatial familiarity with Victorian comforts and landscape aesthetics, productivity, and associated discoveries of 'wilderness', as argued by the author in her essay. Thus plantations produce not only the 'champagne' of teas (term used by the author in this volume) but also a 'taste' (Sen) of England through gendered colonial place making which the organic tea production seems to accentuate.

There is a peculiar sense of commodification of nostalgia of the colonial past. According to the author, the dynamics also enables a peculiar process of urbanisation achieved through a re-creation of "wilderness" in adjoining areas of Darjeeling town, indicating new ways of merging the bucolic into the urban. The role of women labour in the tea plantations is critical, as Debarati Sen writes in her essay in the present volume: 'It is these women who cut and maintain the uniformity of tea bushes to ensure the superior quality of tea.' Simultaneously, her essay explores the anxieties of the Nepalese Indian men regarding their status as outsiders and on the margins of the modern Indian state, which is revealed to Sen during her interviews with them in Darjeeling.

In conclusion, the articles in this volume add to the existing scholarship in the area of Himalaya and trans-Himalaya. Some of the articles delve into the micro-histories, going into the specifics of the socio-cultural state formations in Kumaun, Lahoul and western Tibet through historical, literary and oral sources. Some look at the ways in which the regions and people are interconnected with each other and shape the environment and how the environment and livelihood sustain each other. Other papers locate places like Darjeeling either within the contemporary national or global frame. The issues of ethnicities and sub-nationalities, come together with the issues of marginalities, class, itinerancy, gender and labour.

Endnotes

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[2] Trans-Himalaya in the textbook geography include the Tibet Plateau, Karakoram, Zaskar, Ladakh and Kailas ranges, on the northern, north-western and north-eastern side of the Indian sub-continent.

[3] These views have been discussed in detail in my book, *Empire in the hills,* pp. 34-7.

[4] O'Malley in the Gazetteer of Darjeeling in 1907 is quoting from Hodgson's *Miscellaneous essays*, vol. 1, p. 108.

[5] Hedin, Sven. I, 1907; II, 1909; III, 1913. *Nature* January 27, 1910 p. 367-9. The detailed bibliographic reference is given in Vasudha Pande's essay in the present volume.

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